

Congressional and Assembly Reapportionment Vital Issue

By VINCENT THOMAS
 Assemblyman, 68th District

One of the most important tasks facing us at this session is reapportionment of Congressional and Assembly districts. Since both the United States and our California Constitutions require redistricting after each federal census, it is a serious responsibility imposed upon us to make sure that every citizen is given the representation to which he is entitled in

our national and state legislatures.

Because of California's phenomenal increase of almost 50 per cent in population since 1950, our state is entitled to eight more representatives in the lower house of Congress. But — and this is a fact of which few of us are conscious — the U.S. Constitution is silent as to districting within states. Therefore, state legislatures have the authority to es-

tablish districts for the representation to which the several states are entitled. Some states still have Congressmen-at-large, elected by all their voters. Here in California, all seats are districted.

NOT TOO much trouble or debate over districting the Congressional seats is anticipated. For the past thirty years, the Legislature has followed the

practice of dividing the state into Congressional districts equal in population, though there is nothing in law to require it. On the basis of the recent census returns, it appears that the southern portion of the state will be given five more representatives, the northern three.

Our California Constitution was amended in the 1920s to set up the so-called "federal"

system of districting for our Legislature. The State Senate is districted on a geographical basis, no county having more than one Senator, and no Senator representing more than three counties. The Assembly is divided strictly on a population basis, so its seats must be reapportioned following each federal census.

The Constitution requires that Assembly districts shall be composed of contiguous territory, and shall be "as nearly equal in population as may be." It also prohibits the division of any county unless it con-

tains sufficient population to form two or more districts, and the addition of any part of a county to part of another to form an Assembly district.

SINCE the Constitution still provides for 80 Assembly seats, the problem before us is to district them on the basis of the new census. This will inevitably mean that some areas will gain in representation, while others will lose. Our 1950 population of 10,586,000 set the number of people in each district at about 132,300. The 1960 figure of 15,717,000 means that

each district after reapportionment will contain approximately 196,400 people.

It is too early as yet to do more than speculate on the results of the redistricting. Population figures released for the various counties indicate generally, however, that the southern part of the state will gain seats, while the north will lose. The shift is not expected to be large.

Under existing law, the State Senate will not be reapportioned, and all district boundaries will remain the same. You will no doubt recall that a mea-

sure which would have reapportioned the Senate was the ballot at the last general election, but was defeated by a substantial margin. That has not closed the issue, though. The matter is still under study by non-legislative groups, and there is a possibility that some legislation relating to it may be introduced in our current session.

When the Congressional and Assembly seats have been reapportioned, the new district boundaries will apply at the primary and general elections of 1962.

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